



November 13, 2014

## **KANSAS BULLETIN NO. KS300-15-9**

### **SUBJECT: LTP-Conservation Stewardship Program Guidance for Contract Renewal Evaluation and Obligation**

**Action required by:** December 8, 2014 (Area Offices and Field Offices [FOs])

**Action required by:** December 22, 2014 (FOs)

**Action required by:** December 31, 2014 (Area Office)

**Purpose:** To cancel bulletin KS300-15-6, dated October 29, 2014, and provide updated due dates. Also, provide area and field office guidance to evaluate and obligate contract renewals in the first quarter of fiscal year (FY) 2015

**Expiration Date:** September 30, 2016

Kansas Bulletin KS300-15-6, dated October 29, 2014, is cancelled and being replaced with this bulletin. This bulletin has been updated due to the regional conservationist changing the obligation date and requesting weekly status reports.

Pursuant to the Agriculture Act of 2014 (2014 Farm Bill), Title II, Conservation, Subtitle B, Section 2101, Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) contract participants with active contracts that will expire in 2014 were offered the opportunity to request consideration to renew their contracts for one additional 5-year period.

Contract renewal procedures and requirements are defined in Title 440, Conservation Programs Manual (CPM), Part 508; National Bulletins 300-14-34 and 300-14-39; and a video teleconference held on June 26, 2014, with the recording available on the CSP SharePoint and Program Contracts System (ProTracts) Home page.

The contract renewal process was divided in two phases. Phase I was communicated to the Kansas Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) through bulletin KS300-14-50 and completed in FY2014. This bulletin addresses Phase II.

#### **1. Timeline**

Kansas must supplement the national timeline in this section to manage renewal workload to ensure all eligible renewal offers are obligated by December 31, 2014.

(more)

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<b>Initial Review</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review the application, renewal offer, and supporting documentation.</li><li>• Verify the agricultural or nonindustrial private forest land (NIPF) delineation is consistent with Farm Service Agency records or other state conservationist approved sources.</li></ul>	October 1, 2014
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**There are six subaccounts available to the state (Kansas Statewide Beginning Farmer, Kansas Statewide Socially Disadvantaged, Kansas Statewide NIPF Beginning Farmer, Kansas Statewide NIPF Socially Disadvantaged, Kansas Statewide NIPF, and Kansas Statewide Agricultural Land).**

<b>Evaluation and Obligation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete applicant and land eligibility determinations prior to completing the resource inventory in Conservation Measure Tool (CMT) and establishing stewardship threshold determinations.</li><li>• Assist the participant with selecting new conservation activities that will be adopted during the renewal contract.</li><li>• Complete field verification for all eligible renewal offers.</li><li>• Develop new conservation plan and plan map in Toolkit.</li><li>• Develop the contract and obligate.</li></ul>	Deadline for CMT completion, Renewal Criteria Worksheet Completion, Signatures Obtained, Field Verifications, and Peer Reviews if needed—December 8, 2014.  Second Level Review Materials submitted to Financial Management—December 22, 2014. Send in as completed—Do not hold.  Obligation Deadline—December 31, 2014
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## 2. Evaluation

- A. Renewal applications must be associated with the renewal signup number (CSP-2015-1-Renewal), be linked to at least one initial contract number from FY2010, and be associated with an active or completed contract. Participants with multiple contracts must have all acres combined into one application.
- B. Follow program policy in Title 440, CPM, Part 508, to evaluate renewals unless otherwise specified in the bulletin.

**Note:** Incomplete offers should not be processed.

- C. Participants who requested consideration to renew their contracts may withdraw their application at any time during the evaluation process. The application status in ProTracts must be updated to “Cancelled” once written notification has been received.

- D. The name on the renewal application must match the name from the initial contract. If multiple contracts with different participant names were merged for renewal, then at least one participant name must be the same.
- E. The entire operation under effective control, regardless of the agricultural delineation for the initial CSP contract, must be included in the renewal offer. Newly acquired acres included in the renewal offer must be identified in the agricultural delineation and entered into ProTracts as a lump sum regardless of land use.

### 3. Renewal offer requirements

- A. The renewal offer must demonstrate compliance with the terms of the initial contract.
- B. The participant must adopt and continue to integrate conservation activities across the entire agricultural operation by adopting additional conservation activities.

This requirement means the participant will apply progressive implementation of conservation activities to the agricultural operation.

- C. The participant must, by the end of the contract, pass one of the two following renewal stewardship threshold requirements:
  - (i) Meet stewardship threshold for at least two additional applicable priority resource concerns on the agricultural or NIPF operation.
  - (ii) Exceeds the stewardship threshold for at least two existing applicable priority resource concerns specified by NRCS.

**Note 1:** The renewal requirements will be analyzed using the CMT, the output Summary Report, and the Contract Renewal Criteria Worksheet (located on the Kansas SharePoint Contract Renewal folder).

- D. The stewardship eligibility requirement in CMT is not applicable to renewals. **This feature will display “NA” for the three requirements** listed on the “Overview” tab in CMT.
- E. The “Stewardship Eligibility Requirement Determination,” page 3 of summary report, is not applicable to renewals. This feature will always show “Stewardship Eligibility Requirements Met.”
- F. Contract renewal requirements are determined at the resource concern level not at the activity level.

### 4. Contract Renewal Criteria Spreadsheet

This spreadsheet will be used after the CMT evaluation has been completed. The summary report must be printed from the CMT and the information from the

“Stewardship Requirement Meet” table, page 1, transferred to the spreadsheet. These responses plus responses to the other two renewal requirements will determine if the renewal offer passes the renewal criteria. Once the spreadsheet is completed, it must be printed, signed, and kept in the case file as part of the supporting documentation for the renewed contract.

5. New Conservation Activities

- A. The term “conservation activities” includes both enhancements and conservation practices (CPs). Therefore, either enhancements or CPs may be used to fulfill the requirement of at least one new activity to be planned in the first fiscal year. ***This is for contract renewals only.***
- B. The 2014-1 activity list will be utilized for participants to select new conservation activities to be implemented during the renewal contract.
- C. All new activities must be planned and started after January 1, 2015.
- D. Conservation activities adopted in the initial contract may not be scheduled as new activities in the renewal application unless implemented on land that has not yet received the treatment.

6. Ranking

Ranking of contract renewals applications is not applicable. All eligible contract renewal offers will be approved subject to available funding and applicant meeting program and renewal criteria.

7. Field Verification

- A. Field verification must be completed for all eligible applications prior to obligation as per policy in Title 440, CPM, Part 508, Subpart A, Section 508.76.
- B. Pre-existing documentation in the case file may be used to substantiate knowledge of the operation and current management system if recently verified during field visits prior to payments, for spot checks, for annual contract reviews, and/or 10 percent quality assurance reviews. This discretionary timing of the field verification prior to obligation is not allowed for operations with newly acquired land or changes in the management system.

8. Obligation

- A. Renewal offers will not be obligated until all of the initial contract’s scheduled activities have been certified as completed, regardless of payment status of the initial contract.

- B. Contract renewal obligation must occur prior to the initial contract's expiration date. No exceptions are possible. To ensure renewals are processed in time, the obligations must be completed by the deadline in this bulletin.
- C. The appendix dated October 2014 must be signed by the participants at the time of obligation.
- D. Financially assisted conservation activities in a renewal contract must not be started while the initial contract is active. *The policy that allows a participant to submit a written request to allow implementation of an activity prior to contract obligation is not applicable to renewal contracts.*
- E. A new stewardship plan must be developed to support renewal contract.
- F. Areas will submit weekly reports to the CSP manager of the status of renewals by the close of business every Thursday.

#### 9. Contract Renewal Period of Performance

The contract renewal period of performance begins the day after the initial contract expiration. Obligation date and contract start date will be as identified on the contract Form NRCS-CPA 1202, Conservation Program Contract, and the appendix.

#### Payment

- A. The 2014-1 signup payment rates will be used to determine the new payments for the renewal contract.
- B. Annual payment limitations and contract total payment limitations follow the current regulation.
- C. Annual payment limitations will be implemented by Farm Bill. Payments applied against a 2008 Farm Bill contract will not count towards payment limitations for contracts obligated under the 2014 Act.
- D. A new participant certification of historical underserved is required for minimum payment to be applicable to the renewal contract.

**Contact:** Questions regarding this bulletin should be directed to Quincy W. Coleman, Resource Conservationist at 785-823-4556, or quincy.coleman@ks.usda.gov.

*(Signed)*

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